1:Spier E-5 (1929-1932) 1933 NT15 River Yumans NT15
Maricopa
Halchidhoma

CHAPTER X

DEATH CUSTOMS

CREMATION

184 764 Like other Colorado River Yumans, the Halchidhoma and Maricopa cremated their dead and held a mourning ceremony for them. So far as the details of cremation were concerned the two tribes did not differ, but the slight Maricopa mourning rite was incomparable with the ambitious Halchidhoma affair. The latter closely paralleled that of Yuma and Mohave.

764 The dead were without exception cremated. This included those who died while visiting with foreign tribes, warriors killed in the enemy country, and infants. Those who were not cremated [775] could not enter the land of the dead (see p. 299).

[727] One who died away from home, as in war in the mountains [Yavapai territory], would be cremated right there. They would be quiet about it; gather logs at night, set fire to them, and immediately set out for home. If one died while on a visit to the Mohave, e.g., he was cremated there: if one of their men dies here, we do the same for him. The ashes were not carried home. But the time our people were killed at Yuma, we could not attend to them. They died in a pile in the center of their village. The bones lay scattered about for years. It was the same with all the Yuma who were killed over here.

[115] Cremation persists to this day: it occurred once while I was on the reservation. My aged Halchidhoma informant, Kutox, from whom most of the following description was obtained, was by common consent director of these affairs.

763 When a man had a mortal illness, the shaman in attendance was given four nights in which to cure. On the fourth night, when he knew his efforts were unavailing, he changed his songs. Previously he had referred in them only to things that are white; now he suddenly changed to references to black, and the auditors knew the patient would die. During the first half of the night, he sang persuading the sick man not to go to the other world, reminding him that his property was here. During the second half,

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toward morning, he "pushed him on," telling him that the other world was pleasant, the people were happy there, and he too would be happy. This was all in song; abruptly changing his text and hurrying on to the end. 763

The shaman was followed by an orator, who began to talk just before the sick man died. "When an elderly person was dying, he waited until the speaker came to talk to him, before dying." This speech, as well as those he delivers later, were stereotyped and peculiar to each point of the funeral. 731 763

The speaker reminded the old man how during the early part of his life he had come to love all people; how he thought his hunting trips were a pleasure to everyone who had gone with him; how he came to think his life all that the world could give him. He went on; that having had all these pleasures, he must now part with them. While he lived he knew how to place all the stars and how the sun and moon appeared. Now everything would change: he might never again see these things. If it was the way they said, he would go to the land of the dead. If it was not true, no one knew where he would go. This made the old man feel badly, too. It was always the case that at the end of the speech, the man was dead.

The speaker then addressed the relatives of the dead, telling them to be happy despite their loss. He encouraged them.

How long the corpse was kept before cremation (hutĭnyĭ'k) depended on the length of the last illness. Ordinarily it was kept but half a day, or if the death occurred at night, cremation followed in the morning. But if the person died suddenly after an illness of only a few days, they kept the corpse longer, a whole night or day. 764

The corpse was always carefully prepared: washed, dressed in its best, the hair combed, painted and decorated. It was wrapped in a cloth, tied above the head, with another cord tied around the waist and a third below the feet. These duties were performed by some elderly person outside the family, who was not paid, but served out of friendship and pity.

There was one proper method of preparing the pyre (iaðau'g, "wood pile") and arranging the corpse on it, dictated by practical considerations. A poorly constructed pyre would suddenly fall sidewise and dump out the corpse. Sometimes the pyre was built before the person died. A big post was set into the ground

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264 at the eastern end of the spot selected, so that it stood three feet high. Four smaller logs were laid on the ground in an east-west direction with one end touching the post: the inner pair were straight, the outer logs bowed and held in position by two smaller posts on each side of the large post (Fig. 12). Other layers of poles were laid on these until the pile rose to the height of the post at the eastern end. Dry arrowweed was stuffed between these layers on each side for kindling.

Six men were required to carry an adult corpse, three on a side. They took it from the house and laid it on the ground. The pyre was always near the house, perhaps fifty yards distant. Even in

FIG. 12.—Arrangement of cremation pyre

this short distance, they laid the corpse down three times before arriving there. For the fourth time, they laid it beside the pyre, always on the south side. Each of the four times they halted, the [537] speaker delivered an oration. One man then stood on top of the pyre at its north edge. The others then handed the corpse up to him, which he clasped tightly around the shoulders. The corpse was laid with its head to the east and then turned on its right side so as to face the north. (It was never laid on face or back, but always on its side.) Then, reaching in the cloth at the feet, the right foot was drawn back (i.e. south), and thrust between the logs, the left foot was drawn forward and similarly secured. The purpose of this was to hold the corpse firmly on the burning logs, so that it would not drop down between them to burn in a lump. The deceased was placed with his head to the east so that when he "rose," he would face the west and see his dead relatives coming for him.

Clothing and blankets were piled over the whole pyre. These were contributed by every person who attended. If the dead was

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a man, his favorite horse decorated with paint (or several of them), was staked near by to be killed as soon as the pyre was lighted. The belief was that he could ride one to the land of the dead, packing the clothing, etc., on the others. 764 [775]

While the pyre was burning, an older man (called aume'vă, "fire tender") poked with a long pole, running it under the corpse to let in the air, and pushing the blazing logs over the corpse so that it could not be seen. "For the relatives to see any of the corpse would make them sad." The end post was the last to finish burning. The breast and heart were held to be the last parts consumed.

All this time the relatives were about. Children and elders alike were forbidden to eat or drink. When the body was half cremated and again after it was consumed the speaker delivered an oration. After the pyre had burned to coals, everybody left except the fire tender. This would be early the next morning, e.g, if the cremation had begun early in the night. [262] [537]

When the fire had burned out, four holes were dug close to the heap of ashes, two on the south side, two on the north. Then the fire tender, starting at the west end of the heap, scraped the ashes alternately to the north and south of the center line. He then divided these two piles to the west and east, so as to form four piles. Each was put in its respective hole and covered with dirt. Dirt was also scattered over the whole place. "Then the rain obliterated all signs. It is better that way."

At the funeral of a man who was a singer, the Maricopa (but not the Halchidhoma) had singing and dancing; even the relatives rose to dance. They then returned to cry over the dead. The songs were those the dead man "had liked," i.e., those he had dreamed. The same songs and dance were repeated in their mourning ceremony. 766 533 535

Everything within the dead man's dwelling was destroyed. The objects were thrown into a hole dug beside the house, or sometimes within it. The house was then burned down. This was done because the sickness might have been left in the house, and also, if these articles were left about, the dead, returning, might be seen in dreams and the survivors sicken and die too. They 768 [775] [753]

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this time, when I could have stayed and got a nice big piece of meat for a meal." So he set off home as fast as he could to see if he could not get a piece anyway. [539]

There were four rings of people (animals and birds) all around the pyre. As soon as he got there he acted as though mourning for his father. He saw a place where he could get through; where Opossum, Fox, and all the short animals were in a row. So he jumped over them into the fire and seized his father's heart. (The heart remained because just as when we cremate that is the last portion consumed by the flames. Because Cipas caused himself to be burnt, all our people have done so since.) [764]

He ran off with it in his mouth, everybody chasing him. He ran from the Colorado River to this butte west of here [in the Gila Bend Mountains]. He climbed on top. It was a little higher than the rest, so he could see if they were still following. He set down the heart to cool his teeth. As he set it down, he said, "I had better try it to see if it tastes good." He took a piece and thought it fine. So he finished the rest. Then he gave three names to that butte, so that the new generation might know it by his actions: ɣagâspĭdω′ [meaning unknown]; ixo′ʀâgwĭsĭnu′k, a kind of willow tree (he spread some on top of the butte to set the heart on); ḳa′kâdâsâo′ʀc, Crow's fledglings (Crow had its nest there). Just as he finished he heard all the others coming after him. They chased him again. He ran right by this place [the junction of the Gila and Salt Rivers] to the mountains south of here. (We call them the Greasy Mountains, because he rubbed his greasy fingers on them.) Then he went to a mountain south of these, which would be known to all generations as Heart Mountain, because of the father's heart. [103]

He then went to a slough a mile and a half east of Gila Crossing, known as his swimming pool. When he came out from swimming, he sickened. When he acquired one sickness, he had another, and another, until he had all the sicknesses there are in the world, except a few dangerous diseases. He went still farther east, where he caught these too. Then, when he had all the sicknesses of the world, he ate some sort of green grass, some sea weed. He vomited all the sickness and was cured. He was a

2:Bartlett G-5 (1850-1853) 1854
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Pima NU29

P RY 171 dividing line between them; nor is there any distinguishing character in their villages. I consider that the arts of spinning and weaving, and of making pottery, now practised by both tribes, and in which they are equally expert, originated with the Pimos, who inherited this knowledge from their ancestors; and that from the earliest period, doubtless for centuries, they have occupied portions of the same valley where we now find them. In leaving their villages, I noticed on the edge of the plateau traces of former habitations, which had been abandoned for a great length of time.

P RY 1777 648 The Coco-Maricopas took up their abode in the valley immediately adjoining the Pimos about thirty years since, from a point lower down the Gila, where they were exposed to the constant attacks of the Yumas and Apaches, which tribes, in consequence of their greater numbers, had nearly annihilated them. They came hither for protection, and formed an alliance, offensive and defensive, with the Pimos. They found the latter possessing the arts of weaving, of building more comfortable dwellings, of making better pottery, enjoying a more peaceful mode of life, than that to which they had been accustomed. These arts and habits the Maricopas gradually adopted. Their languages are totally different, so much so that I was enabled to distinguish them when spoken. The former is soft and melodious, the latter harsh and guttural. The Pimos bury their dead, while the Coco-Maricopas burn theirs. These peculiarities stamp them as distinct nations.

P RY 241 I have not cited the agriculture of these tribes as superior to that of all other Indians; although I may

3: Whited G-5 (1890) 1894 NT15 River Yumans NT15
Maricopa
Pima NW 29

P R 135

these metals exist within the limits of the several reservations. A few adventurers claim that if the Indian title to the land could be extinguished enterprising miners would soon develop paying quantities of the precious metals, but such statements need verification.

P R 764

CUSTOMS AND RELIGION.—Should one of the tribe die, it was formerly the practice to burn the tent, hunt and kill all the animals owned by the deceased, and destroy all his property; but such practices have been abandoned within the past 15 years. Their mode of burial now is to dig a grave 5 or 6 feet in depth, then dig a vault at one side large enough to receive the body, fill the grave, and cover it with poles or brush, probably to prevent the violation of sepulture by the coyotes. Several such Indian burying grounds may now be seen on the Gila River reservation.

P R 797

Viewed from a religious standpoint, a steady advance has been made within the past 15 years, though the progress has been slow. The Presbyterian church has erected a small adobe chapel at this agency, in which Sunday school and other services are held every week and are well attended. In addition, a small adobe chapel has been erected and partially completed at Blackwater village, about 12 miles east of the agency, but within the limits of the reservation, with a church membership of 22, about equally divided between the sexes. The Pimas have 2 church buildings, valued at $2,000.

P R 177 262 342

PROGRESS.—The material and economic progress made by the Pima and Maricopa tribes within the past 15 years is quite noticeable. Formerly all carcasses of horses and mules which fell on the great road stretching along the south bank of the Gila river, through what is now the Pima reservation, were quickly appropriated by the Indians and used as food. Their dwellings were then miserable huts, built of brush and weeds; now there are nearly 100 adobe houses, and a large number of their huts are built of willows and sticks, well plastered on the sides and roof with adobe, those among them who can do so building houses in the Mexican style. According to a count made July 1, 1890, out of 500 dwellings of all kinds 80 were adobe houses.

P R 177 648 241

The agent is encouraging improvements by issuing a new wagon to each Indian who builds a house, imposing the condition that the wagon shall be properly cared for and housed. On the fulfillment of certain other conditions he issues a plow or harrow, thus encouraging improved methods of farming. The Indians quite readily avail themselves of these opportunities, and since September 1, 1889, there have been issued 23 wagons, 12 sets of harness, 30 plows, 200 shovels, 200 hoes, 50 iron rakes, 100 axes, 100 sickles, and 40 swamp hooks. The Pimas are self-supporting, receiving no rations or annuities and no gifts from the government except farming tools, and their desire for these implements shows the progress that is being made in agriculture among them.

P R 177 291 [822] [302]

In dress great progress has been made in adopting that of the whites. Probably one-half of the men wear shirts, pants, shoes, and hats; one-third go barefoot; rarely one may be seen at his cabin without covering to the legs. Some of the children wear very little clothing. The women wear no shoes in warm weather. A scanty skirt, with blouse waist, suffices for their covering, except that they wear a shawl, or a cheap substitute for one, drawn around their shoulders without folds and falling to the knees. No covering for the head is worn except when the shawl is drawn over it. Red is the prevailing color of the dress; the brighter it is the more desirable it will be. The hair is parted in the middle and combed back, and is usually worn long by both sexes, but the men have been encouraged to cut their hair short and wear hats, and efforts in this direction are meeting with some success.

P R 177 273 548 [519] [648]

MORALS OF THE PIMAS AND MARICOPAS.—Drunkenness, prostitution, theft, and gambling may be classed as the prevailing vices of these Indians. According to the best authority attainable drunkenness is on the increase among the Pimas. The cause of this increase may be traced to contact with the whites, who sell them intoxicants. They manufacture a cheap fermented liquor from corn or cactus fruit and indulge in drinking at their dances; but drinking does not appear to be more common with them than among the whites, and, indeed, one has but to stand by any of the many open bars of the territory to become convinced that drinking prevails extensively among the superior race. Cases of prostitution are too common, but do not seem to be increasing. Instances of brawls and quarrels are not frequent unless some of the parties are drunk. Fifty Indian boys attending school will pursue boisterous games day after day and never engage in a quarrel or a fight. The Pimas as a tribe are peaceful, and claim that they never warred with the whites, but were obliged to take up the hatchet against their ancient enemies, the Apaches, in order to preserve their existence, and having quieted them, they returned to their peaceful avocations.

P R 164

DISEASES.—The tribe is more or less tainted with venereal diseases. The Indians are scattered over the reservation, and the agency physician attends to but a small portion of those who are sick. No reliable statistics of diseases and deaths have ever been collected, and it is impossible to determine with any great degree of accuracy the proportion of deaths resulting from the several diseases or accidents. The agency physician reports the diseases as scrofula, consumption, conjunctivitis, and syphilis. Rheumatism prevails to some extent, but owing to the mildness of the climate it is not as prevalent as among tribes farther north. Scrofulous swellings on the neck and scrofulous ulcers are often seen. One old resident thinks that from 10 to 20 per cent of the deaths are due to consumption. The physician claims that a large majority of the cases of scrofula and conjunctivitis can be traced to a syphilitic taint.

P R [755]

The Indians can not be relied upon to administer medicines furnished and prescribed by the physician. A large majority of them lack faith in prescribed remedies. They prefer the singing and howling of the medicine man.

/82 cont./
000 cooking pots of many sizes.

From the Pima they also learned to weave cloth from
291 [177] native cotton. The dress of the women formerly consisted of a piece of this cloth wound around the body under the arms and reaching to the knees, with an outer shawl for cold weather.
[302] The men wore only the breech-cloth, but painted their bodies elaborately.

The Maricopa, of course, possessed the same wealth of
262 native vegetal and animal foods as the Pima, and employed the same methods of gathering and treating them. The fruit of the giant cactus, found in unlimited quantities, is still one of their important staples. This strange creation of the plant world blooms in early spring and ripens its fruit in June and July. Using a long
[222] pole with a wooden blade at the end, the women cut the fruit from the plant and carry it to the settlements in large baskets. The
[252] fruit is eaten fresh, dried, made into jelly, or preserved. They
273 also make quantities of wine from it, first boiling the fruit, then draining the juice into large jars, which are kept in a heated house for a week to ferment. A number of women, sometimes twenty-
[476] five or more, formerly joined in making wine, and when it was
[574] ready their neighbors were invited to a great feast, which always ended in a debauch. This deplorable custom, along with many of a commendable nature, was derived from the Pima.

241 The Maricopa are a sedentary, agricultural people. The
[252] principal crop of their small irrigated farms is wheat, which they
[412] grind into coarse flour on the metate, or hand mealing stone.
582 /83/ The little that remains of their former social organization indicates that it was identical with that of the Mohave. Nothing could be learned tending to show that under this system marriage within recognized groups of kindred was prohibited. The union
584 was without ceremony, and formal consent of the parents was not necessary; if they did not send the young man away, it was assumed that they were willing to accept him as a son-in-law.

● [764] As among other Yuman tribes, the dead are burned. Within
765 a few days after the cremation of the body of an important man a mourning ceremony, called Nyimich, is observed. Fuel is heaped up to form a pyre, on which are placed pieces of clothing of each of the near relatives of the deceased. The men march around the pyre shouting and crying, followed by the women carrying

/87 cont./

773 poles and sticks, and finally to make bows and arrows, and with several men on each side to fight and shoot one another. That night many men were lying wounded and dying, for Thoshipá was angry with them on account of their mistreatment of his snake.

Hanyé, the Frog, was a powerful witch, and the people told her to give poison to Thoshipá. The Frog asked them what Thoshipá /88/ did in the night, and they answered that he had a long pole near the ocean, up which he climbed every night. So she went under the ocean, and one night, when Thoshipá was on the top of the pole and vomiting, Hanyé swallowed the discharge and blew it back into his mouth, thus poisoning him. When he became sick, Thoshipá directed the people to make a house. After three attempts that resulted in imperfect structures, they succeeded in building a round, earth-covered house, in which they laid the god. Before leaving his children he instructed them
● 764 how they were to burn his body, telling them they should always
773 observe the same custom when one of their number died. When the people saw that Thoshipá was dying, they cried bitterly. The creator told his people about the moons, and what time of the year was proper for the planting of various crops, giving to each new moon a name. As he began to name the second six, he died. Then the men made a pile of wood for burning the god, and after it was finished carried the body toward the place of the pyre, laying it down twice on the way, and the third time on the pyre itself. Thus arose the custom of burning the dead. When pyre and body had been consumed, they buried the ashes in the sand and left the place, migrating to the south of the Mohave, where they made their home on the bank of the river Havil, the Colorado.